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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/516,953	04/07/2005	Balthasar Miller	4358-13	8618
23117 7590 07/02/2009 NIXON & VANDERHYE, PC 901 NORTH GLEBE ROAD, 11TH FLOOR ARLINGTON, VA 22203				
EXAMINER				
MERCADO, JULIAN A				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
1795				
MAIL DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
07/02/2009		PAPER		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/516,953

Applicant(s)

MILLER, BALTHASAR

Examiner

JULIAN MERCADO

Art Unit

1795

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 01 May 2009.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-29 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 1-18, 28 and 29 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 19-27 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 06 December 2004 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB-08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 12-6-04
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restrictions

Claims 1-18, 28 and 29 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b) as being drawn to a nonelected invention, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Election was made **without** traverse in the reply filed on May 1, 2009.

Claims 19-27 are pending for consideration.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed on December 6, 2004 has been considered by the examiner.

Specification

The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: the examiner notes the references made in the specification to the claim numbers. See, for example, page 5 at line 19 which references claim 1. As claim 1 is a non-elected claim, should the instant application pass to issue the correspondence of the claims in the specification with the issued claims would be inconsistent. Accordingly, the specification requires revision of every reference made to a pending claim so that only elected claims are referenced. To simplify this issue it is suggested to delete the claim numbers referenced in the specification in its entirety.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Objections

Claims 24-27 are objected to because of the following informalities:

In claims 24-27, it is suggested to change "characterized in that," to --characterized in that--.

Appropriate correction is required.

Drawings

Figures 1-3 should be designated by a legend such as --Prior Art-- because only that which is old is illustrated. See MPEP § 608.02(g). Corrected drawings in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The replacement sheet(s) should be labeled "Replacement Sheet" in the page header (as per 37 CFR 1.84(c)) so as not to obstruct any portion of the drawing figures. If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 20 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 20 recites the limitation "the fibrous region" in line 2. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim 21 recites the limitation "the surfaces" in line 1. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim 21 recites the limitation "the material opposite one another" in line 1. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 19-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Mussell et al. (U.S. Pat. 5,620,807).

For claims 19 and 22, Mussell et al. teaches a fibrous, flat and porous synthetic material having a core [7] having a first porosity and a cover layer [6] having a second porosity, said second porosity being less porous than the first porosity, "[t]he portion of the layer adjacent to the membrane electrode assembly (6) (hereafter, "small pore region") has a mean pore size which is at least ten times smaller than the portion of the layer adjacent to the opposite side of the layer (7) (hereafter, "large pore region"). See col. 2 lines 54-62. The core [7] is 10% porosity compared to 85% for layer [6]. See col. 5 line 53 et seq. and line 67 et seq.

For claims 20, 21, 23 and 25, and notwithstanding the 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph rejection (discussed above), the core is fibrous insofar as comprising carbon fibers. See col. 6 line 9 et seq. The cover layer having less porosity implies that this material is more dense than the core region, i.e. more material per unit volume. The fabric material is specifically disclosed as being used as a "nonwoven porous layer". See col. 1 line 56 et seq.

As to the claimed "consists essentially of carbonized/graphitized polymeric fibers, the examiner asserts that the transitional phrase "consisting essentially of" limits the scope of a claim to the specified materials or steps "and those that do not materially affect the basic and novel characteristic(s)" of the claimed invention. *In re Herz*, 537 F.2d 549, 551-52, 190 USPQ 461, 463 (CCPA 1976) (emphasis in original) To this extent applicant has the burden of showing that the introduction of additional steps or components would materially change the characteristics of applicant's invention. *In re De Lajarte*, 337 F.2d 870, 143 USPQ 256 (CCPA 1964). See also *Ex parte Hoffman*, 12 USPQ2d 1061, 1063-64 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1989) Absent a clear indication either in the specification or in the claims of what the basic and novel characteristics actually are, "consisting essentially of" has been interpreted as equivalent to "comprising." See, e.g., *PPG*, 156 F.3d at 1355, 48 USPQ2d at 1355. See also *AK Steel Corp. v. Sollac*, 344 F.3d 1234, 1240-41, 68 USPQ2d 1280, 1283-84 (Fed. Cir. 2003) Notwithstanding, in *Mussell et al.* the material includes graphite paper, carbon fibers or particles and conductive polymers, *inter alia*, such as carbon/PTFE of a specified ratio. See col. 6 line 9 et seq. and col. 7 line 36 et seq.

For claims 24, 26 and 27, the fabric material is coated with a catalyst layer [2]. See col. 2 line 36 et seq. This discrete layer is specifically disclosed as a laminated layer to form an incorporated assembly.

As to the claimed steps defining "said material being formed by...", i.e. the claimed fibrillating..., forming... and heating... steps, these *process* limitations have not been given patentable weight insofar as not giving breadth or scope to the *product* claim. The claimed product appears to be the same or similar to the prior art product insofar as being a fibrous, flat and porous synthetic material for the reasons discussed in this section. In the event that any differences can be shown by the product of the product-by-process claims, such differences would have been obvious to the skilled artisan as a routine modification of the product absent of a showing of unexpected results. *In re Thorpe*, 227 USPQ 964 (Fed. Cir. 1985).

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. U.S. Patent 5,368,940 and U.S. Patent 5,300,206 are cited of cumulative relevance.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Julian Mercado whose telephone number is (571) 272-1289. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick J. Ryan, can be reached on (571) 272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR

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system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.

/Julian Mercado/
Examiner, Art Unit 1795

/PATRICK RYAN/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1795